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The Honorable Iris Y. Martinez was sworn into her first term in the Illinois State Senate on January 8, 2003 to represent the people of Illinois' 20th Legislative District. Her election marked the first time a Hispanic woman had been elected to the State Senate in Illinois history. She made history once again by serving as Assistant Majority Leader from 2007-2008, a position never before held by a Latina. Senator Martinez has used her position as a State Senator to be an advocate for affordable housing and a strong voice for Illinois' children.

Senator Martinez's position as Champion of Affordable Housing and Homeownership for the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) has made her a leading voice for affordable housing in the Illinois Senate. She has passed legislation providing incentives to school districts providing to safe, affordable housing near schools. In addition, she has fought to help individuals residing in low-income housing to cope with rising energy costs by allowing landlords to capture LIHEAP credits on behalf of their renters, ensuring energy bills are paid on time.

During tough economic times, Senator Martinez has fought to protect renters from becoming victims of foreclosure by requiring that tenants are given timely notice if their building is in foreclosure. The legislation states that renters must be given a minimum of 30 days notice in the event of an eviction. Prior to the passage of the legislation, many renters found themselves homeless or living in poor conditions as a result of not being given notice that their buildings were in foreclosure.

Senator Martinez has also been a tireless promoter of programs to improve the quality of education for youth in Illinois, including the Grow Your Own Teach Initiative, an effort to place 1,000 teachers in low-income, hard-to-staff Illinois public schools over the next seven years by offering forgivable student loans to paraprofessionals, parents and other community leaders who wish to become teachers. She has also worked to support the Golden Apple Scholar Program, which seeks to place highly qualified teachers in the State's hard-to-staff schools.

Senator Martinez currently serves as Chair of the Senate's Licensed Activities Committee and Vice-Chair of the Senate's Pensions and Investments Committee. She is also a member of the Education, Energy and Redistricting Committees.

Martinez was born and raised in Chicago's West Town community. She resides in the city's Albany Park neighborhood and has a daughter, Jacklyn Nicole. Her district includes some of Chicago's most diverse neighborhoods including Albany Park, Avondale, Belmont, Cragin, Hermosa, Humboldt Park, Logan Square, and Portage Park.